

Government's plans to use agency workers to quell strikes breaches 'international labour standards'

Submitted by: BlueSky Public Relations Ltd

Monday, 20 June 2022

Responding to reports that the Government plans to repeal a legal ban on agency staff filling in for workers on strike, the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) has warned that such a move would breach international labour standards.

According to Tania Bowers, Global Public Policy Director at APSCo, failure to follow the appropriate routes to drive legislative changes such as this would be detrimental to compliant practices in the employment sector:

"We would not expect the Government to go ahead with this plan for a change in the agency worker legislation without consultation with the recruitment sector including ourselves. This legislative move would be out of line with most developed nations and in breach of international labour standards. It's also not a short-term solution as it requires primary legislation change.

"This government was elected on a manifesto of improving worker rights via implementation of the recommendations of 2017's Taylor Review, currently being considered by the Prime Minister's Future of Work review. We are therefore surprised by the unexpected move to amend the agency legislation, which will only restrict the impact of workers exercising their rights to strike.

"We are sceptical about the impact of removing the prohibition on agency workers replacing strikers, or those workers moved to replace strikers. This is for several reasons. Most of the roles are skilled and therefore agency workers may require upskilling, onboarding and compliance checks. This means that there would certainly be a time lag before workers would be ready to fill resourcing needs. In a very skills short market, skilled workers, such as train drivers for example are unlikely to be "on the bench" and readily available. Furthermore, workers - and we anticipate recruitment businesses - will be reticent about replacing strikers.

"Whilst most highly skilled sectors supported by APSCo's members are not generally unionised, we note that both teaching and NHS unions are also talking of balloting their members in the context of effective pay cuts in a period of rising inflation, a risk faced by the entire UK workforce. APSCo proudly supports the Education and Clinical Healthcare sectors through its sector groups and Compliance + standards."

Ends

Press contact

Vickie Collinge

01582 790 705

vickie@bluesky-pr.com